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ABSTRACT

This two-part study examined aspects of family environments that are considered to be influential in the development of young children's creativity. Mothers of children ages 4 to 6 years were surveyed on their valuing of particular personality characteristics (The Ideal Child Checklist) and specific features of the home environment (The Creative Environment Scale). The majority of mothers were found to be providing environments that are considered nurturing of creativity, and valued personality characteristics important to creativity. A subsample of mothers who participated in the first phase of the study responded to a second questionnaire to identify their parenting style. Parenting style was categorized from the responses to two scales measuring maturity demands and parental control strategies. Authoritarian mothers were less likely to provide a home environment that nurtured creativity. (Contains 29 references.) (Author/EV)

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CREATIVITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN THE FAMILY CONTEXT?

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ABSTRACT

This two-part study examined aspects of family environments which are considered to be influential in the development of young children's creativity. One hundred and twenty-three mothers of children aged 4–6 years were surveyed on their valuing of particular personality characteristics (The Ideal Child Checklist) and specific features of the home environment (The Creative Environment Scale). The majority of mothers were found to be providing environments which are considered nurturant of creativity, and valued personality characteristics considered important to creativity. A subsample of mothers who participated in the first phase of the study responded to a second questionnaire to identify their parenting style. Parenting style was categorised from the responses to two scales measuring maturity demands and parental control strategies. These measures were developed by Greenberger (1988). Authoritarian mothers were less likely to provide a home environment that nurtured creativity. The results are discussed in terms of the two positions of parenting that emerged from the analyses. Similar positions, traditional versus modern parenting, have been identified in previous research by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985). These aspects of parenting are discussed in relation to the features of family environments which support creativity and the personality characteristics which parents value.

INTRODUCTION

While much research has been conducted to enhance our understanding of creativity, few studies have focused on young children. Of those studies which have been conducted, little attention has been paid to the relationship between young children's creativity and their family environments. This lack of research is both surprising and disappointing since the powerful influence of the family on children's development has long been recognised (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Laosa and Sigel (1982) maintained that, in relation to children's learning and development, the family was not only the first, but also the most significant influence. This influence is thought to be exercised by parents directly through their interactions with children and, indirectly, via the manner in which they organise and arrange the family life and provide activities within the home (Power & Parke, 1982).

Definitions of creativity tend to process-oriented (creativity is considered to be a particular style of acting or thinking), product-oriented (creativity is seem to result in identifiable and tangible outcomes), or both process- and product-oriented. The following definition which reflects both a process and product orientation describes creativity as

> *the process of sensing problems, forming ideas, and driving unprecedented solutions of unique problems with elaboration and embellishment* (Torrance, 1963, cited in Kulp & Tarter, 1986:154).

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Creativity and family contexts

Wright and Fesler (1987) considered that the difference between the promise and fulfilment of children's creative potential lies in particular features of early home environments. Aspects of this environment which have been identified as being causally related to creative development were the values and attitudes of parents (Raina, Kumar & Raina, 1980), and their child-rearing practices (Lett, 1976).

Torrance (1965) believed that, if children were to develop their creative potential, parents must value those personality characteristics which are associated with creative individuals. He proposed that characteristics such as stubbornness, independent thinking, risk-taking, non-conformity and sensitivity were descriptive of creative individuals. It is understandable that these characteristics may be considered undesirable and may even be discouraged by many parents, however, Torrance (1965), Raina et al. (1980) and Singh (1987) believed that acceptance and encouragement of such characteristics were crucial for creativity to flourish.

Findings generated by parental responses to the Ideal Child Checklist (developed in 1965 by Torrance) are reasonably consistent, revealing that parents often ignore or discourage their children's creative behaviours. Studies by Raina (1975), Raina et al. (1980) and Singh (1987) revealed that parents invariably favoured those characteristics which reflected conformity. Singh (1987), for example, found that mothers valued obedient, socially well-adjusted, and conforming characteristics, while they least valued characteristics such as a willingness to take risks, asking questions, and independence of judgement. Similarly, findings by Kohn (1977) and Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) indicated that, regardless of culture of socio-economic status, parents valued more highly those qualities in children which reflected conformity more than self-directed behaviour in children.

Early studies which examined the influence of family environments on children's creativity revealed a relationship between creativity and parenting style. Cropley (1967) emphasised that high levels of creativity were associated with specific child-rearing practices. Parents of creative children were found to encourage personal autonomy and independence. They were less concerned with right or conventional behaviours. Walberg, Rasher and Parkerson (1979) acknowledged that parental interactional styles play a key role in facilitating creativity, and they also emphasised that parents need to demonstrate high levels of creativity in order that children were constantly exposed to creative models.

Wright (1987) surmised from a review of previous literature that environments which nurtured creativity were characterised by non-authoritarian control, non-possessive parent-child relationships and a climate where adults modelled creative thinking. Wright noted that through non-authoritarian, democratic discipline children were encouraged to be independent and make their own decisions. Through a caring, supportive and non-possessive relationship with their parents, children were likely to develop high self-esteem. Wright proposed that there were three facets of creative home environments. These were the encouragement of independence, demonstration of respect for the child and the provision of a stimulating environment.

From interaction in a home environment where parents value play, exploration and curiosity, children develop skills necessary for, and positive attitudes toward, creative thinking. Such environments may well reflect authoritative parenting as proposed by Baumrind (1967). Through observational studies, Baumrind developed a typology of parenting styles which differentiated style according to the relative degrees of warmth and control exhibited by parents in their interactions with children. She identified that children who had authoritative parents (high in warmth and control) were more likely to have higher self-esteem and be more socially and cognitively competent. The children of authoritarian parents (low in warmth and high in control) were lower in self-esteem and less competent socially and cognitively.

Scope of the study

Creativity is viewed as a broad construct which encompasses concepts of cognitive processes and personality factors. The focus of the study is on the attributes which are considered

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supportive of the development of creativity and the parental practices that are considered to nurture it, rather than the direct measurement of creativity per se.

Although it is recognised that fathers are important in the development of young children, the respondents in this study were mothers, since mothers continue to carry the substantial responsibility for the care of young children. The manner in which mothers may support creativity by way of their values and practices provided the framework of this research.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this research was to identify particular features of Australian family contexts in the 1990s which are likely to nurture creativity in young children. The relationships between the personality characteristics of children which parents most value, features of the home environment which are considered to nurture creativity, and mothers' parenting styles were examined. The study was conducted in two phases.

In Phase One, parental ideas about ideal personality characteristics in children were examined, as well as parental ideas about the importance of certain home experiences. Specific research questions from this phase were:

1. What are the personality characteristics of children that mothers most value, and are these personality characteristics associated with creativity?

2. What are the features of family environments which mothers consider important and are these features considered to nurture creativity?

3. What are the relationships between the personality characteristics that mothers value and the features of family environments they provide?

The measurement in Phase One constituted the basis for Phase Two. Phase Two was concerned with the relationship between the constructs identified in the first phase of the research and parenting style. In this phase, a subsample of the respondents in the first stage participated. The specific research questions were:

1. What is the relationship between maternal parenting style and the personality characteristics that mothers most value?

2. What is the relationship between maternal parenting style and the features of family environments that mothers provide?

Overview of methodology

The research employed a survey design. Each phase of the study involved the completion of a questionnaire by mothers who had responded to an invitation to participate in a research study concerned with families and young children's developmental experiences. Questionnaires in the first phase were distributed to a number of kindergartens, preschools and year one programs in the inner suburbs of Brisbane and these were then distributed by the teachers to the parents. Each questionnaire was supplied with a replied-paid envelope. Of the 300 questionnaires originally distributed, 123 were returned, representing a return rate of 41%. From this first phase, 83 respondents agreed to further involvement by supplying a contact name and address. In Phase Two, 71 respondents returned questionnaires, representing a return rate of 85%.

The subject group for Phase One were primarily Anglo-Australian (80%). Ninety-one percent were married or living with a partner. Seventy-seven percent had post-secondary education or training, and 56% were currently employed. There were no significant differences (using t-tests or Chi-square) between the respondents in the first and second phases by the demographic characteristics of age, ethnicity, marital status, education or employment status.

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PHASE ONE

Subjects

Respondents were 123 mothers of children aged 4 to 7 years. The mothers had a mean age of 35.9 years (SD = 4.44), while the mean age of the focus children was 66.97 months (SD = 10.49). The children's ages ranged from 46 to 99 months of age.

Measures

Two measures for ascertaining parents' orientation to nurturing creativity and valuing of particular characteristics in children were used. *The Ideal Child Checklist* was derived from MacKinnon (1962), Paguio and Hollett (1991), Paolini (1990) and Torrance (1965). Respondents were required to rate 24 personality characteristics on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (unimportant) to 7 (highly important). The measure assumed two subscales — characteristics assumed to nurture creativity (e.g., curious) and characteristics assumed to inhibit creativity (e.g., sensible). *The Creative Environment Scale* was derived from Wright (1987). Respondents rated 18 items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always), indicating the frequency with which they encouraged specific behaviours in the focus child, or which they practised themselves. This scale assumed three subscales — the encouragement of independence, demonstration of respect for the child and the provision of a stimulating environment.

Analysis and findings

Personality characteristics valued by parents

Responses to the Ideal Child Checklist were factor analysed by principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation. Variables with loadings greater than .40 were included for the interpretation of a factor. The measure was assumed to have two subscales — characteristics considered conducive to creativity and characteristics considered detrimental to creativity. However, the initial principal component analysis revealed that a two factor solution did not provide the best fit for the data. A three-factor solution with orthogonal rotation afforded the most simple and interpretable structure accounting for 45.9% of the variance. The first factor, *The Inquiring Child*, accounted for 22.5% of the variance and contained 12 items. The second factor, *The Reliable Child*, accounted for 15.7% of the variance and contained 7 items. The third factor, *The Compliant Child*, accounted for 7.8% of the variance and contained 4 items. It would appear that Factor 1 reflected those items conducive to creativity, while Factors 2 and 3 were coherent subsets of the items considered detrimental to creativity. One item, self-reliant, had complex loadings across Factors 1 and 2 and was excluded from further analyses. Details of the items and the factor loadings are presented in Table 1.

Alpha coefficients revealed adequate internal reliability for the factor scores with an alpha level of .83 for Factor 1, The Inquiring Child; .80 for Factor 2, The Reliable Child; and .70 for Factor 3, The Compliant Child.

The group of characteristics labelled The Inquiring Child clearly comprised those characteristics which are considered to be conducive to creativity (such as curious, independent in thinking, and imaginative). On the other hand, the second and third groups of characteristics, labelled The Reliable Child and The Compliant Child, comprised those characteristics which are considered detrimental to creativity (such as polite, tidy, well behaved, compliant, eager to please, and quiet). Those dimensions seem to reflect a difference in the strength of conviction about how children should conform to behavioural standards.

Insight into how parents prioritise the three groups of personality characteristics was gained by calculating the mean item score for each factor. The inquiring and reliable characteristics were rated highly with a mean item score for inquiring of 5.93 (SD = .53), and for reliable as 5.82 (SD = .62), while the compliant characteristics rated least highly with a mean item score

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of 3.99 (SD = 1.00). This indicated that parents valued characteristics considered conducive to creativity but also characteristics which gave them a sense of being able to rely on their child.

Creative family environments

Responses to The Creative Environment Scale were factor analysed using principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation. Variables with loadings greater than .40 were included for the interpretation of a factor. A two factor structure solution accounted for 35.9% of the variance. One item, show affection, failed to reach the cut-off of .40 for inclusion in the interpretation of a factor and was excluded from further analysis. The first factor labelled *The Democratic Environment* accounted for 23.9% of the variance and included 11 items. The second factor labelled *The Restrictive Environment* accounted for 12.1% of the variance and included six items. Details of the factor loadings are presented in Table 2. Alpha coefficients revealed satisfactory internal reliability of .74 for the first factor and only moderate reliability at .58 for the second factor.

Analysis of The Creative Environment Scale did not support Wright's (1987) model of creative family environments. Wright had considered that three groups of family practices (encourage of independence, demonstration of respect, and provision of a stimulating environment) were responsible for nurturing creativity in the home. However, analysis of the responses designed to elicit information about these practices, revealed two distinct groups of practices. Both groups comprised a mix of items related to the encourage of independence, the demonstration of respect, and the provision of a stimulating environment. They reflected two types of practices — those which could be considered democratic and those which could be considered restrictive. This dichotomous position about parenting attitudes appears to mirror 'traditional' versus 'modern' parenting practices as proposed by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985).

Mothers in this study were more democratic than restrictive in the types of environments that they provided for their children. This was apparent from the higher mean item score on the democratic factor, 5.53 (SD = .65) compared to the mean item factor score, 2.90 (SD = .85) for the restrictive dimension.

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TABLE 1

FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE IDEAL CHILD CHECKLIST FOR A PRINCIPAL COMPONENT FACTOR ANALYSIS USING AN ORTHOGONAL ROTATION

	F1	F2	F3	h^2
The Inquiring Child				
Curious	**.73**	.02	.13	.56
Adventurous	**.68**	.01	.28	.55
Independent in thinking	**.67**	.19	.34	.61
Imaginative	**.65**	.15	.22	.50
Sensitive	**.61**	.04	.13	.39
Unwilling to accept things	**.60**	.04	.04	.36
Asking questions	**.55**	.11	.21	.36
Risk taking	**.54**	.06	.05	.30
Persistent	**.54**	.25	.34	.47
Resourceful	**.50**	.23	.37	.56
Intuitive	**.47**	.20	.03	.27
Engrossed in tasks	**.42**	.00	.34	.30
The Reliable Child				
Polite	.00	**.72**	.18	.55
Well behaved	.14	**.72**	.20	.57
Tidy	.12	**.69**	.20	.54
Sensible	.10	**.69**	.04	.48
Cooperative	.21	**.65**	.05	.47
Completes tasks	.26	**.61**	.24	.51
Sociable	.19	**.48**	.13	.28
The Compliant Child				
Compliant	.02	.24	**.72**	.57
Eager to please	.21	.32	**.67**	.59
Quiet	.05	.04	**.62**	.39
Conforming	.01	.16	**.59**	.38
% of variance	22.5%	15.9%	7.8%	

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TABLE 2

FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT MEASURE FOR A PRINCIPAL COMPONENT FACTOR ANALYSIS USING AN ORTHOGONAL ROTATION

	F1	F2	h^2
The Democratic Environment			
Encourage breadth of interests	**.75**	.05	.56
Encourage acceptance of mistakes	**.67**	.07	.45
Involve child in family decisions	**.63**	.05	.40
Encourage positive and negative feelings	**.61**	.01	.37
Encourage questioning of opinions	**.61**	.28	.45
Discuss different moral and ethical views	**.60**	.10	.37
Encourage child's own interests	**.52**	.11	.29
Encourage child's imaginative play	**.52**	.30	.37
Encourage self-reliance	**.52**	.09	.28
Discuss issues of conflict	**.47**	.28	.30
Explain reasoning behind family rules	**.42**	.33	.29
The Restrictive Environment			
Discourage sexually inappropriate activities	.01	**.65**	.42
Concerned about growing independence	.25	**.62**	.45
Smack child as a means of discipline	.02	**.61**	.37
Encourage child not to make mistakes	.10	**.52**	.28
Demonstrate non-stereotyped parenting roles	.39	**.47**	.38
Keep child's creative products	.17	**.42**	.20
% of variance	23.9%	12.1%	

Relationship between dimensions of the ideal child checklist and the creative environment scale

Intercorrelations between the dimensions on these measures are presented in Table 3. There were a number of significant correlations among the dimensions of maternal behaviour. The dimensions, The Inquiring Child, and the provision of a democratic environment were significantly correlated, ($r = .42$, $p < .01$), and The Inquiring Child was also correlated with the dimension, The Reliable Child, ($r = .24$, $p < .01$), indicating some overlap in their measurement on The Ideal Child Checklist. The dimension, The Reliable Child was also correlated with the dimension, The Compliant Child, ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), indicating again some overlap in the dimensions on The Ideal Child Checklist. It would seem that the dimensions of The Inquiring Child, The Reliable Child and The Compliant Child provide a continuum for preferences for ideal characteristics in children from inquiring through reliable to compliant. The dimension, The Compliant Child, was also significantly correlated with the provision of a restrictive environment, ($r = .44$, $p < .01$), and negatively correlated with the provision of a democratic environment, ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$).

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PHASE TWO

Subjects

Seventy-one respondents, who had participated in the first phase of the study and who had agreed to further contact, responded to a follow-up questionnaire. The mothers had a mean age of 35.5 years (SD = 4.15), while the mean age of the focus children was 66.0 months.

Measures

Maturity demands

Maternal demands for mature behaviour was measured on a scale developed by Greenberger (1988). Mothers were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always) the frequency with which they expected their child to meet certain behavioural expectations. Of the 28 questions, 9 measured demands for independence, 8 measured prosocial demands, and 11 measured demands for self-control. Examples of items in each of these domains is presented in Table 3. Mean scores generated in this study were very similar to those obtained by Greenberger and Goldberg (1989).

TABLE 3

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS USED TO MEASURE THE DIMENSIONS OF MATURITY DEMANDS (INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR, PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SELF-CONTROL)

Independent behaviour
How often do you expect your child to make his/her own friends among children the same age?
Prosocial behaviour
How often do you expect your child to lend and share possessions willingly?
Self-control
How often do you expect your child to sit or play quietly (or not interrupt) while adults are having a conversation?

Parent control

A measure of the strategies employed by mothers to control their children's behaviours, as developed by Greenberger (1988), was used. This measure, based upon the concepts and findings of Baumrind (1971, 1983), was intended to operationalise elements of disciplinary style and responsiveness. It included child-rearing goals (such as the importance of developing respect for authority, learning to think for oneself) and manner of dealing with children's anger and curiosity. Mothers were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how strongly they 1 (agreed) to 7 (disagreed) with each of 39 statements concerned with raising children aged 4 to 6 years. The scoring of responses gave scores for the dimensions of harsh control, firm/responsive control, and lax control. Typical items measuring these dimensions are presented in Table 4.

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TABLE 4

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS USED TO MEASURE THE DIMENSIONS OF PARENT CONTROL (HARSH, FIRM/RESPONSIVE AND LAX CONTROL

Harsh control
When I make a rule, I just *make* it: I don't go into explanations.
Firm/Responsive control
The most important thing I am teaching my child is to think for himself/herself.
Lax control
I let my child decide when to go to bed, or wait for him/her to fall asleep.

Parenting Style

A categorisation of parenting style is made possible by cross-classifying the mothers' scores on the Maturity Demands and Parental Control measured using the median scores for the sample group, for the subscales on these measures. Detailed information for the categorisation of parenting style is provided by Greenberger (1988). Mothers were identified as either Permissive, Permissive/Authoritative, Authoritative, Authoritative/Authoritarian, or Authoritarian. The categorisation according to parenting style for the sample group is presented in Table 5. As only two mothers were classified as being Authoritarian/ Authoritative, this group was excluded from further analysis.

TABLE 5

CLASSIFICATION OF MOTHERS ACCORDING TO PARENTING STYLE

Style	Frequency	%
Permissive	20	28.2
Permissive/Authoritative	18	25.4
Authoritative	10	14.1
Authoritative/Authoritarian	2	2.8
Authoritarian	21	29.6

Analysis and findings

In order to examine the relationships between parenting style, the valuing of certain personality characteristics in children and the provision of family environments which nurture creativity, the two measures developed in the first phase of research were used. Mean scores for the components of these measures The Ideal Child Checklist and The Creative Environment Scale were calculated for the subsample. Using t-tests, there were no significant differences between the factor scores for those who participated in the second phase of the research compared to those who did not participate.

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Parenting style and dimensions of the ideal child checklist

Differences in maternal parenting style and scores for the components, The Inquiring Child, The Reliable Child and The Compliant Child from The Ideal Child Checklist, were examined by one-way multivariate analyses of variance with parenting style as the independent variable and the component scores on The Ideal Checklist as the dependent variables. These analyses were used to determine whether there were any significant differences in scores on the factors, according to the style categories. One-way multivariate analysis of variance was used because there were multiple dependent variables and so the analyses were protected against inflated Type 1 errors due to multiple analyses. A significant multivariate effect was followed by univariate analyses and post hoc comparisons between groups using Newman-Kuels Multiple Range Test to interpret where any differences lay between the groups on the parenting style categorisation.

The means and standard deviations on the dependent measures from The Ideal Child Checklist as a function of parenting style are shown in Table 6. With the use of Pillais Criterion, the multivariate effect was significant ($p = .01$). Univariate tests revealed a significant effect for the dependent variable, The Compliant Child, $F (3, 65) = 3.43$, $p = .02$. The post hoc comparisons using Newman-Kuels tests indicated that mothers with an authoritarian parenting style had significantly higher scores (at the .05 level) for valuing compliance than mothers with a permissive parenting style.

TABLE 6

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR COMPONENTS OF PARENTING STYLE (PERMISSIVE, MIXED PERMISSIVE/AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITARIAN) AND COMPONENTS OF THE IDEAL CHILD CHECKLIST (INQUIRING, RELIABLE, COMPLIANT)

		Inquiring	Reliable	Compliant
Permissive	Mean	79.25	40.25	14.25
	SD	6.38	3.88	4.04
Permiss/Authoritat	Mean	77.28	40.50	15.33
	SD	5.52	4.18	3.74
Authoritative	Mean	80.70	40.40	15.90
	SD	5.40	4.30	3.90
Authoritarian	Mean	75.19	42.52	17.86
	SD	7.21	3.78	3.18

Parenting style and dimensions of the creative environment scale

Differences in maternal style and scores for the dimensions Democratic and Restrictive on The Creative Environment Scale were also examined by one-way multivariate analysis of variance with parenting style as the independent variable and the component scored as the dependent variables. Again, only the categories of permissive, permissive/authoritative, authoritative and authoritarian were used in these analyses because there were only two subjects classified as Authoritarian/Authoritative. This category was not included in the analyses. The means and standard deviations of each dependent measure as a function of parenting style are shown in Table 7.

With the use of Pillais Criterion, the multivariate effect was significant ($p = .02$). Univariate tests revealed a significant effect for the component Restrictive Environment, $F (3,62) = 4.09$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons using Newman-Kuels Multiple Range Test indicated that mothers with an authoritarian style had significantly higher scores (at the .05 level) for the

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provision of a restrictive environment compared to mothers with a permissive parenting style and also with mothers with a mixed permissive/authoritarian style.

TABLE 7

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE COMPONENTS OF PARENTING STYLE (PERMISSIVE, MIXED PERMISSIVE/AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITARIAN) AND COMPONENTS OF THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT SCALE (DEMOCRATIC, RESTRICTIVE)

		Democratic	Restrictive
Permissive	Mean	62.68	14.95
	SD	6.75	3.26
Permiss/Authoritat	Mean	60.65	15.18
	SD	6.45	2.94
Authoritative	Mean	63.44	16.00
	SD	5.45	5.24
Authoritarian	Mean	58.57	18.90
	SD	6.04	4.77

REVIEW OF FINDINGS

What were the personality characteristics of children that mothers most valued? Were these personality characteristics those which are associated with creativity?

Mothers' responses to the questions relating to the valuing of children's personality characteristics identified three groups of characteristics, not two as outlined by Torrance (1965). The three groups reflected characteristics that could be considered 'inquiring' (or 'creative' according to Torrance), 'reliable' and 'compliant' (or 'conforming' according to Torrance). The difference between the two groups of conforming characteristics, it appears, lies in the degree to which those characteristics represent adherence to behavioural restrictions. Mothers generally indicated that they valued inquiring personality characteristics (such as curious, independent in thinking, imaginative and resourceful) over reliable (such as polite, well behaved, tidy and sensible) and compliant (such as compliant, eager to please and quiet) personality characteristics. In other words, they were more predisposed towards creative than conforming personality characteristics. This represents a departure from previous research findings (Raina, 1975; Raina et al., 1980; Singh, 1987; Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1990; Torrance, 1965). This may be accounted for by changing values and the cultural context. Values may have changed with respect to parenting in the 1990s and also this is the first study in the Australian social context.

What were the dimensions of family environments which are considered to be nurturant of creativity?

Mothers' responses to the questions related to the nature of family environments identified two dimensions and not three dimensions as proposed by Wright (1987). Wright's three dimensions, encouragement of independence, demonstration of respect and a stimulating environment, were not reflected by the dimensions that emerged from this research. What did result were two dimensions that effectively dichotomised particular parenting practices according to whether they were democratic or restrictive. As such, Wright's model was more easily conceptualised in terms of the traditional versus modern parenting constructs proposed by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985). Mothers favoured more democratic environments than restrictive environments. In doing so, they frequently encouraged their children to broaden

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their interests, be self-reliant, express positive and negative feelings and be involved in family decision-making. It would be reasonable to suggest, then, that these practices are more reflective of modern parenting than traditional parenting.

What were the relationships between the personality characteristics that mothers valued and the types of environments they provided?

Some significant relationships were noted here. Two relationships such as those between the provision of a democratic family environment and preference for an inquiring child, and between provision of a restrictive environment and preference for a compliant child, were predictable. It makes intuitive sense that mothers who value curiosity, independent thinking, asking questions and risk-taking are more likely to provide a democratic home environment than mothers who value compliance, conformity and quietness.

What was the relationship between mothers' parenting style and the personality characteristics that mothers most valued?

It was expected that mothers who were authoritative in their parenting style would value most highly those personality characteristics seen as 'inquiring'. Silverberg, Tennenbaum and Jacob (1992) described authoritative parents as those who encouraged their children's individuality, expression of ideas and contribution to decision-making. However, no significant relationship between authoritative parenting and the inquiring personality characteristics was found. A significant effect was noted between authoritarian parenting and valuing of compliant child characteristics.

What was the relationship between maternal parenting style and the types of environments that mothers provided?

The only significant relationship between parenting style and type of family environment was that authoritarian mothers reported to be more restrictive in their environmental provisions. It is likely that mothers who exercise stringent and uncompromising control over their children place stronger limits on their expression of ideas (Silverberg et al., 1992). They would also discourage sexually inappropriate activities, use harsher discipline techniques and be concerned about their child's growing independence. There was no evidence of a relationship between authoritative parenting and the provision of a democratic environment. This was surprising as it seems likely that mothers who are non-controlling, and encouraging of their child's individuality and freedom of thought, would also provide environments that actively encourage independence, respect and the exploration of ideas. These were the environments reported by MacKinnon (1962), Wright (1987) and Pratt-Summers (1989) which nurtured creativity.

Limitations of the study

Several limitations of the study were apparent. Firstly, a number of the measures used require further development. In order to explore parental beliefs, values and practices, The Ideal Child Checklist and The Creative Environment scale need to be refined. Reliabilities of the scale dimensions were moderate to high. Some concurrent validity was established by the relationships between the dimensions of measures. This study also relied on survey questionnaires to gather data. While questionnaires are considered invaluable for obtaining parental views on a range of issues (Touliatos, Perlmutter & Strauss, 1990), a multi-method approach using interviews and observations would have provided additional insight into the area of investigation. Another limitation concerned the homogeneity of the sample. In terms of ethnic diversity and socio-economic status, the sample used in this study was extremely limited. An overwhelming majority of the mothers was highly educated and, as such, results of the study cannot be generalised to other groups. Further studies need to sample a wider cross-section of the population. Finally, in order to accurately shed light on early environments for creativity, the values, beliefs and practices of fathers must also be accounted for in future research on the nurturing of creativity in families.

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Conclusions

Results of the study indicated that most mothers valued the personality characteristics that are associated with creativity and provided environments that are considered to nurture creativity. This is encouraging in light of previous research (Raina, 1975; Raina et al., 1980; Singh, 1987; Torrance, 1965) which had revealed a general preference among parents for conforming characteristics. These new findings may be indicative of a change in maternal attitudes — a change which has resulted in more child-centred family environments.

This study has provided insight into understanding parental perspectives and family practices which may nurture creativity. It is important that we continue to recognise the importance of nurturing children's creative potential thereby maximising their ability to keep pace with the phenomenal changes taking place in the world.

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